IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

1. (Original) An apparatus, comprising:

a receiver operative to receive an object identifier;

a code generator to generate a code;

a database operative to associate the code with the object identifier; and

a transmitter operative to transmit the code.

2. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein:

the receiver is operative to receive information about the object; and

the database is operative to associate the information with the object identifier.

3. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the code generator includes a random number generator.

4. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the code generator is operative to generate base-35 codes.

5. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the code generator is operative to generate alphanumeric codes.

6. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a verifier operative to verify that a request to generate the code comes from a manufacturer of an object identified by the object identifier.

7. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a code comparator to compare the code with a second code in the database.

8. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a computer including the receiver, the code generator, the database, and the transmitter.

9. (Original) An apparatus, comprising:

a database including at least a first code associated with a first object identifier and a first information about an object identified by the object identifier;

a receiver operative to receive an inquiry about a second code;

a code comparator to compare the second code with the first code; and

a transmitter operative to transmit the first information associated with the first object identifier if the second code matches the first code.

10. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 9, wherein:

the apparatus further comprises a notice indicating that the second code is not valid; and

the transmitter is operative to transmit the notice if the second code does not match the first code.

11. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the database is operative to associate the inquiry with the first object identifier if the second code matches the first code.

12. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 9, wherein:

the receiver is operative to receive additional information; and

the database is operative to associate the additional information with the first object identifier if the second code matches the first code.

13. (Currently Amended) A system, comprising:

a receiver operative to receive from a requester a request for a code for an object identified by an object identifier and an information about the object;

a code generator to generate the code;

a database operative to associate the code with the object identifier and to associate the information with the object identifier;

a verifier operative to verify that the requester is a manufacturer of the object;

a code comparator to compare the code with a second code in the database;

a transmitter operative to transmit the code to the requester;

means for placing the code on the ~~an~~ object identified by the object identifier;

means for searching the database for the code responsive to an inquiry about the code from an inquirer, the inquiry received by the receiver; and

means for retrieving the information associated with the object identifier from the database, the information transmitted by the transmitter to the inquirer.

14. (Original) A computer-implemented method for using a code, comprising:

receiving a request for a code, the request including an object identifier;

generating the code;

adding the object identifier to a database;

associating the code with the object identifier in the database; and

responding to the request with the code.

15. (Original) A method according to claim 14, wherein generating the code includes determining whether the code is already associated with a second object identifier in the database.

16. (Original) A method according to claim 15, wherein generating the code further includes generating a second code if the code is already associated with the second object identifier in the database.

17. (Original) A method according to claim 14, wherein generating the code includes randomly generating the code.

18. (Original) A method according to claim 17, wherein generating the code includes using a random number generator to randomly generate the code.

19. (Original) A method according to claim 14, wherein generating the code includes generating an alphanumeric code.

20. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 14, wherein generating the code includes generating a base-35 code.

21. (Original) A method according to claim 14, wherein:

receiving a request includes receiving a manufacturer identifier; and

associating the code with the object identifier includes associating the manufacturer identifier with the object identifier.

22. (Original) A method according to claim 14, further comprising verifying that a manufacturer of an object identified by the object identifier made the request.

23. (Original) A method according to claim 22, wherein verifying that a manufacturer of an object identified by the object identifier made the request includes requesting the manufacturer to verify that it made the request.

24. (Original) A method according to claim 22, wherein:

receiving a request includes receiving a manufacturer code associated with the manufacturer; and

verifying that a manufacturer of an object identified by the object identifier made the request includes searching the database to determine if the manufacturer code is associated with an identifier of the manufacturer.

25. (Original) A method according to claim 24, wherein verifying that a manufacturer of an object identified by the object identifier made the request further includes, if the manufacturer code is not associated with the identifier of the manufacturer, sending a message to the manufacturer.

26. (Original) A method according to claim 14, wherein:

receiving a request includes receiving information; and

the method further includes associating the information with the object identifier.

27. (Original) A method according to claim 26, wherein:

receiving information includes receiving a question; and

associating the information includes associating the question with the object identifier.

28. (Original) A computer-implemented method for using a code, comprising:

receiving an inquiry from a requester, the inquiry including the code;

searching a database to determine if the code is associated with an object identifier in the database; and

if the code is associated with an object identifier:

accessing information associated with the object identifier; and

returning the information to the requester.

29. (Original) A method according to claim 28, further comprising receiving update information from the requester.

30. (Original) A method according to claim 29, further comprising associating the update information with the object identifier in the database.

31. (Original) A method according to claim 29, further comprising sending the update information to a manufacturer identified by a manufacturer identifier associated with the object identifier.

32. (Original) A method according to claim 28, further comprising, if the code is not associated with an object identifier, returning to the requester a notice that the code is not valid.

33. (Original) A method according to claim 32, further comprising:

requesting additional information from the requester; and

receiving the additional information from the requester.

34. (Original) A method according to claim 33, further comprising sending the additional information to a manufacturer identified by a manufacturer identifier associated with the object identifier.

35. (Original) A method according to claim 28, further comprising associating the request with the object identifier.

36. (Original) A computer-implemented method for using a code, comprising:

identifying an object;

requesting a code for the object from a computer, the request including an object identifier for the object;

receiving the code for the object; and

placing the code on the object.

37. (Original) A method according to claim 36, wherein placing the code on the object includes printing the code on the object.

38. (Original) A method according to claim 36, wherein placing the code on the object includes etching the code on the object.

39. (Original) A method according to claim 38, wherein etching the code includes etching the code on the object using a laser.

40. (Original) A method according to claim 36, wherein placing the code on the object includes printing the code on a material separate from but included with the object.

41. (Original) A method according to claim 36, wherein requesting a code includes providing information about the object to the computer.

42. (Original) A method according to claim 41, wherein providing information includes providing an identifier for a manufacturer of the object.

43. (Original) A method according to claim 41, wherein providing information includes providing a second code associated with a second object.

44. (Original) A method according to claim 41, wherein providing information includes providing a hyperlink that can be used to access additional information about the object.

45. (Original) A method according to claim 36, wherein:

receiving the code includes receiving an alphanumeric code; and

the method further comprises converting the alphanumeric code to a machine-readable code.

46. (Original) A computer-implemented method for using a code, comprising:

determining a code from an object;

providing the code to a computer; and

receiving information from the computer concerning an object identified by an object identifier associated with the code.

47. (Original) A method according to claim 46, wherein:

receiving information includes receiving a question from the computer; and

the method further comprises:

preparing a response to the question; and

providing the response to the computer.

48. (Original) A method according to claim 46, wherein:

receiving information includes receiving a hyperlink that can be used to access additional information about the object; and

the method further comprises using the hyperlink to access the additional information.

49. (Original) A method according to claim 46, further comprising providing additional information to the computer.

50. (Original) A method according to claim 46, wherein providing the code includes scanning the code using a machine.

51. (Original) A method according to claim 46, wherein determining a code includes reading the code from the object.

52. (Original) A method according to claim 46, wherein determining a code includes determining the code from a material separate from but included with the object.

53. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 46, wherein receiving information from the computer includes receiving a notice from the computer that the code is not valid.

54. (Original) A method according to claim 53, further comprising:
receiving a request for information about the code from the computer; and
providing the information about the code to the computer.

55. (Original) A computer-implemented method for using a code, comprising:
identifying an object by a manufacturer;
requesting a code for the object from a computer by the manufacturer, the request including an object identifier for the object and an information about the object;
receiving the code for the object by the manufacturer; and
placing the code on the object by the manufacturer;
delivering the object by the manufacturer to an inquirer;
determining the code from the object by the inquirer;
providing the code to the computer by the inquirer; and
receiving the information about the object from the computer by the inquirer.

56. (Original) Computer-readable medium containing a program to use a code, comprising:

software to receive a request for a code, the request including an object identifier;

software to generate the code;

software to add the object identifier to a database;

software to associate the code with the object identifier in the database; and

software to respond to the request with the code.

57. (Original) Computer-readable medium containing a program to use a code, comprising:

software to receive an inquiry from a requester, the inquiry including the code;

software to search a database to determine if the code is associated with an object identifier in the database; and

if the code is associated with an object identifier:

software to access information associated with the object identifier; and

software to return the information to the requester.

58. (Original) Computer-readable medium containing a program to use a code, comprising:

software to identify an object;

software to request a code for the object from a computer, the request including an object identifier for the object;

software to receive the code for the object; and

software to place the code on the object.

59. (Original) Computer-readable medium containing a program to use a code, comprising:

software to determine a code from an object;

software to provide the code to a computer; and

software to receive information from the computer concerning an object identified by an object identifier associated with the code.

60. (New) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the code is designed to be visible to a user of an object onto which the code is affixed, so that the user can read the code from the object with his eyes.

61. (New) An apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the code is designed to be visible to a user of an object onto which the code is affixed, so that the user can read the code from the object with his eyes.

62. (New) A system according to claim 13, wherein the means for placing the code on the object identified by the object identifier includes means for visibly placing the code on the object, so that a user can read the code from the object with his eyes.

63. (New) A method according to claim 14, wherein generating the code includes generating the code so that the code can be visibly placed on an object identified by the object identifier, enabling a user of the object to read the code from the object with his eyes.

64. (New) A method according to claim 36, wherein placing the code on the object includes visibly placing the code on the object, so that a user can read the code from the object with his eyes.

65. (New) A method according to claim 46, wherein determining a code from an object includes receiving the code as input from a user of the object, the code visibly placed on the object so that the user can read the code from the object with his eyes.

66. (New) A method according to claim 55, wherein placing the code on the object by the manufacturer includes visibly placing the code on the object, so that a user can read the code from the object with his eyes.